

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 07783

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEAN, E
SUBJECT: US/ASEAN ECONOMIC CONSULTATIONS -- POINT OF
CONTACT

1. SUMMARY. SEPTTEL CONTAINS TEXT OF SECRETARY ROMULO'S FIRST PERSON NOTE OF MAY 8 REQUESTING THE USG TO COURSE ITS COMMUNICATIONS WITH ASEAN ONLY THROUGH DESIGNATED POINT OF CONTACT, I.E., GOP. MRS. MANALO HAD EARLIER DISCUSSED THIS QUESTION WITH EMBOFFS AND SEPARATELY WITH DAS ERLAND HEGINBOTHAM DURING THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT. AT HEGINBOTHAM'S SUGGESTION WE SUBMIT FOLLOWING PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION AS GUIDELINES GOVERNING USG COMMUNICATIONS WITH ASEAN. END SUMMARY.

2. AT PRESENT, DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS TO MANILA ARE REPEATED INFO TO THE OTHER ASEAN CAPITALS. WHAT HAPPENS IS THAT ONE OR MORE OF THE INFO EMBASSIES REVEAL THESE INSTRUCTIONS TO THEIR FOREIGN OFFICE COUNTERPARTS, PROBABLY MORE IN THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF ASEAN MATTERS RATHER THAN IN THE SENSE OF AN OFFICIAL APPROACH. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THESE DIALOGS ON ASEAN ISSUES ARE A NORMAL FUNCTION OF OUR EMBASSIES AND THAT THESE DISCUSSIONS CANNOT BE REALISTICALLY CARRIED ON WITHOUT SOME REFERENCE TO THE US-ASEAN RELATIONSHIP. NONETHELESS THE
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NET EFFECT, AS PERCEIVED BY THE GOP AND OTHER ASEAN GOVERNMENTS, IS THAT THE USG HAS MADE MULTIPLE, SEPARATE APPROACHES ON THE SAME MATTER. THE RESULT IS A FAIR AMOUNT OF CONFUSION AMONG THE ASEANS AND US AND A CERTAIN RESENTMENT ON THE PART OF THE GOP THAT WE ARE SEEMINGLY NOT HONORING IT AS THE DESIGNATED CONTACT POINT. MRS. MANALO HAS COMMENTED THAT ASEAN DOES NOT HAVE A SIMILAR

PROBLEM WITH OTHER NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES, WHICH SIMPLY STICK TO THEIR POINT OF CONTACT. WHAT IS NEEDED PARTICULARLY, WE BELIEVE, IS A HIGHER LEVEL OF DISCIPLINE IN THESE CONTACTS RESPECTING US-ASEAN RELATIONS. WE DOUBT THAT THE PROBLEM CAN BE ELIMINATED ENTIRELY, BUT IT CAN BE AMELIORATED.

3. WITH THESE DIFFICULTIES IN MIND, WE SUGGEST FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION THE FOLLOWING RESTATEMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR SUCH CONTACT:

- A. AS A RULE, ALL OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS -- AND PARTICULARLY ALL WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS -- WILL BE VIA THE DESIGNATED U.S. EMBASSY MANILA-PHILIPPINE DFA CHANNEL.
- B. THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS AND MANILA'S REPORTING WILL CONTINUE TO BE SENT INFO TO EMBASSIES IN OTHER ASEAN CAPITALS. HOWEVER NO INFO EMBASSY WILL MAKE AN OFFICIAL APPROACH TO ITS HOST GOVERNMENT UNLESS SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED BY THE DEPARTMENT.
- C. INFO EMBASSIES SHOULD SHOW RESTRAINT IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS CONCERNING US-ASEAN RELATIONS. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THAT THESE ISSUES ARE BOUND TO COME UP IN NORMAL CONVERSATIONS WITH FOREIGN OFFICE COUNTERPARTS, INFO EMBASSIES SHOULD NOT NORMALLY TAKE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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INITIATIVE IN RAISING THEM. INFO EMBASSIES MIGHT APPROPRIATELY RESPOND TO INQUIRIES BY COUNTERPARTS, BUT WITH THE DISCLAIMER THAT THE RESPONSE IS UNOFFICIAL AND THAT THE OFFICIAL POSITION IS BEING COMMUNICATED THROUGH THE MANILA CHANNEL. IN PARTICULAR, IT WOULD SEEM DESIRABLE FOR INFO EMBASSIES NOT TO JUMP THE GUN IN IMPARTING INFORMATION TO HOST GOVERNMENTS. IF THE OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION IS COMING FROM MANILA, IT MIGHT BE EMBARRASSING TO THE GOP IF ANOTHER ASEAN GOVERNMENT FIRST RECEIVES THE WORD FROM THE LOCAL U.S. EMBASSY.

- D. ASEAN WASHINGTON COMMITTEE (AWC) WILL CONTINUE AS ANOTHER POINT OF CONTACT, AND ALL OF US OUT HERE APPRECIATE THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS KEPT US INFORMED OF ITS MEETINGS. AS A GENERAL RULE, WE WOULD EXPECT THE ASEAN AMBASSADORS TO REPORT SUCH MEETINGS TO THEIR FOREIGN OFFICES, AND AMEMBASSIES SHOULD BE INFO ADDRESSEES ONLY, UNLESS SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE INSTRUCTIONS FOR A SIMILAR APPROACH IN THE FIELD TO SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT VIS-A-VIS THE AWC. TOUSSAINT

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